

LUCIFER'S LETTER

TO

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T E R S A,

Capital of BELLIGOSA,

CONCERNING

RELIGION and the THEATRE:

OFFERING

Sage Proposals for the Improvement of both.

TRANSLATED

From a Curious old M. S. very scarce, and humbly
presented as a New Year's Gift to all the Learned
and Pious in *Britain*.

✓ EDINBURGH:

Printed in the Year MDCCLXIX.

BUCHER'S LETTER

T. E. R. A.

City of New York

RELIGION and the THEATRE

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LUCIFER'S LETTER, &c.

INTRODUCTION.

FROM a child I have been fond of the monuments of antiquity; and to this day when I see the magnificent ruins of old buildings, I muse over them with a solemnity and reverence not to be expressed; with great sorrow too, because many councils and events, of which these buildings were once the scenes, are now lost in devouring Oblivion. I will not however detain myself, or any to whom this may come, with moralizing upon the venerable ruins of antiquity, tho' few subjects are fitter for it; it is only necessary to say, I have always impatiently desired to visit Greece, Egypt, Italy, and Syria, where the most extraordinary monuments of human grandeur and of human littleness are to be seen; but hitherto my favourite passion hath not been indulged in its full extent.

My travels are now more of the sedentary kind, if I may say so, in reading what I cannot see, and in allowing Imagination its unbounded excursions; and here I have the pleasure of declaring, that the curious and learned are very favourable to me, as they furnish me with whatever comes in their way for my entertainment. One of them lately sent me an old Latin manuscript, concerning the state of religion, and of the theatre, in Terfa, the capital of Bellicosa,

which I shall translate, as far as my little knowledge of Latin and English will go, and where it is not legible I must stop; because I think a translator, where his author fails him, ought to stop, and not to supply what is wanting from his own imagination. And yet I fear there will be a sad reckoning between authors and their translators and commentators, who, from the resource of imagination, not to say of some still worse faculty, have made them say what they never said. All the sacred writers, from Moses to John the apostle, loudly complain of the officious gentlemen who have misrepresented them; Homer, Thucydides, Herodotus, down to Tacitus, grone under the like injuries. I speak nothing of a multitude of authors, whether ancient or modern, who may have been made sometimes to speak a strange language; for they have no injury to complain of, unless it be that ever they were published at all.

My great difficulty is to find in the globe Terfa and Bellicosa; but I must not indulge to fancy upon account of the poverty of my geographical knowledge. As I am ignorant of this very material point, I fairly confess it, leaving it to the disquisition of the more learned. My humble conjecture is, that Bellicosa is some country near the Alps. One thing is very evident, that the inhabitants of Terfa and Bellicosa were most vicious and corrupt, and never to be compared with my countrymen, who excel in religion and morals, as well as in arts, war, and elegance of manners. They had a theatre, but a very profligate one, from which ours will differ extremely. It will be an entertainment perfectly rational, virtuous, and moral; and may I not be allowed to translate an old manuscript

script, and to publish it too, which, containing an account of an ancient people, will only serve, upon comparison, to shew us, how much preferable we are in every view? And here I could, with the greatest joy, expatiate, in commendation of my fellow-citizens and countrymen of all ranks, but that I consider this would be a species of self-flattery, and I must hasten to my subject, lest I should verify what the poet says of such authors as I fear I may prove to be, if a bare translator may assume that honourable name,

Parturient montes, nascetur ridiculus mus.

Here, in the very entrance upon my business, I must gratify my longing reader, by telling him, it is the Devil's letter to Tersa, &c. I am going to translate for him. I need not tell him where my learned friend got the manuscript. He knows our young gentlemen almost all now travel a little, for what they call education and improvement; and indeed it would be very hard if never one of them brought home any thing with him more than he carried out. Nor need I make any apology for speaking of the Devil in Scotland, whose existence even our very philosophers believe; and no body surely will doubt the existence of one who is spoken of almost in every conversation, and often in every sentence. At any rate I must translate what I have, and nothing else must I say. By the bye, my manuscript calls him Lucifer, and the title stands thus:

*Luciferi Regis Regum, Aeris Principis, totiusque
Mundi, Epistola Civibus nonnullis carissimis
Terfæ, et Bellicosæ Amicis omnibus.*

Pandemonii, Anno Regni 60,005, Dieque hujus Anni 360.

I will not translate the address of Lucifer to some of the inhabitants of Terfa, and to all his friends of Bellicosæ, which abundantly shews his pride; I shall only notice, that what he calls the year of his reign is more truly the year of his damnation, or of his expulsion from heaven. This wretched spirit engages men to imitate him by glorying in their shame; and calling what is their misery their happiness. Further, we see the Devil's pride in the date of his epistle, wherein he greatly outdoes all the great families of the world; and even the old Egyptians, in their pretensions to antiquity. Yet it will be allowed he is very ancient, but only in wickedness, therefore, instead of being honoured, is the more to be abhorred, upon account of his antiquity. The same may be said of a race of tyrants in the longest descent, whom the stupid and flattering world may revere and call Royal, while all men of sense and spirit will allow them antiquity, but an antiquity horrible as the Devil's is.

I will comment no more, but translate only.

“YE citizens of Terfa, and inhabitants of Bellicosæ, have long had the Christian religion among you, and to my great joy many of you are now tired of it, and none more than some of those who express the greatest zeal and fondness for the Christian name. As Augustus politically talked to the Romans of the republic

republic when it had lost its existence, for these boast of that name when they have utterly denied it. These persons have converted Christianity into the old religion of the Pharisees. I knew those well, and these could hardly resemble them more, though all *their* souls had transmigrated into them.

Many of your politer people, again, use Christianity, because they cannot yet get fairly rid of it, and would be very sorry if any were cruel enough to think them in earnest in using it. They go to church well dressed, shewing themselves to the best advantage, and observing others with emulation and envy, or some other desire, no less agreeable to me. If it is cold weather, they betake themselves to cards, dice, or some other diversion, to kill the very tedious Sunday, to them the most gloomy and dismal day of the week, unless it be enlivened with those amusements, gay company, a good table, and a cheering glass. If a fine day and barbarous custom force them out to church, it is pleasant to see how sprightly they look, and what ogling there is over all the church, so that I might be in the pulpit for any thing they know. If the music is good, it will entertain them a little, and they hope it will soon rise to the perfection of any other musical entertainment, to make it worth their while to go to church. I would not chuse that they should not go to church, or that they should find Christianity in it. In all the cities and nations where my power has been greatest, there ever hath been an outward religion, which, instead of hindering, hath been subservient to it. Now that Christianity is well nigh gone from you, I would still have you to frequent the church, and something ought to be

be found out to bring people together instead of being suited to the taste of all sorts of persons. The temples formerly were the most curious and magnificent buildings, the very ruins of some of them are still the wonder of the world; when they stood in all their glory, they excited the veneration of all ranks; my service was well attended, and all mankind brought their riches to it. Your neighbouring churches for magnificence and multitudes of worshippers vie with my old temples, and console me abundantly for their destruction.

Before I open to you the new worship which I am about to introduce, it is necessary to shew you my prospect of success. One of the foreign *literati*, I acknowledge a very rambling and superficial, though witty writer, has banished all hope and fear of a future state, and made ridicule the test of truth. This test he has applied so soundly to Moses, Joshua, David, Jonah, &c. that venerable as these men were before the appearance of this author, every man is almost now ashamed of speaking of them in the ancient manner. Other worthies of that fraternity have gone further, in discovering that there is, and there can be, no sin in the world; a discovery for which mankind have an eternal obligation to them. To it I owe a vast increase of my subjects in the elegant and polite world. Nothing imported into your country ever rendered it so conspicuous as this discovery. Courtiers, and even maids of honour, not to say all politicians, and members of the august senate, however averse from philosophical enquiries, shall eagerly grasp this discovery, and hold its authors in everlasting admiration. It is a decisive blow to Christianity,

nity, which is an encroachment upon the liberty of human nature, to which I am most extensively indulgent. This discovery does more against Christianity than the thousand volumes which have been written for me; yea, I myself could never have invented any thing so much to my purpose. You see I grow warm, and indeed I may be forgiven, for I never felt so much joy since my interview with the first human creatures in Paradise.

All nations, and none more than many of you, who have known this discovery, have availed themselves of it. Every thing hath happened in course after it. What you once called faith is now the paradise of fools, or the scare-crow of the ignorant and vulgar, both the great and the little vulgar; humility is meanness of spirit; self-denial, a barbarous restraint upon human nature; and the love of enemies, a scandalous and ungentlemanly folly, a decent cover of cowardice, or mere hypocritical or enthusiastical rant.

You now see how far you have already got rid of Christianity, and how resigned all your very fashionable people are to the dictates of the foreign philosophers. Still I advise you to go to church, when it shall be worth your while, and I am going to shew you how it may be so.

The Sunday must become a mere holiday, a day of pleasure, yea, the most pleasant of all the week. The preacher shall name God or Christ as little as possible, and never with the old fanatic reverential sound, but with the smartness of a beau, when he swears half drunk by either. He shall keep clear of all antiquated-peculiarities, and quote any author, yea, even my
good.

good friend Tristram Shandy, rather than the prophets and apostles. He shall inveigh against no vice, for there is none; or if he believes there is, it must be a vice he believes none hearing him does commit, and he must charitably tell them so. If he takes any passage of the gospel to preach upon, he must spend all his time in accounting for the geography and history of places, and in other such fine showy learning, whereby he may display himself, and offend none. He must only teach benevolence and good humour, the free use of Nature's bounty, and the boundless benignity of the Author of nature to all his creatures, and their certainty of happiness under his government. And here he may shrewdly hint, as I have sometimes heard it done, that the scruples and fears of conscience are bodily disease, and enthusiasm or superstition. He must never speak of hell, in imitation of the foreign court preacher, who told his audience, it was not to be named in their presence. He must never speak of my existence, unless it be to shew the impossibility of it. He must dress well, speak neatly, and always short, but never in earnest, so as to disturb his hearers.

He must pray too, but in a manner as genteel and complimentary to the Deity as possible; even a little witty or philosophical, somewhat resembling an academical oration to a prince, upon his royal visit to a seat of learning. The address of a lover, in a play, to his mistress, would, perhaps, still make a better prayer, *mutatis mutandis*, with this single exception, that such address might be rather over earnest and passionate.

You

You need not think it strange I plead for church-meetings, because I see the importance of them to me; it is impossible to extinguish conscience altogether, wherefore I am content to make my own use of it, without attempting its extinction. With all my address, I never yet could govern any country without religion, and I have been, on this account, always willing to let mankind have some religion that will please them, and yet serve myself; so that if I were to complain of these philosophers, it would be, that they have rather committed a sort of supererogation in my service, by annihilating all sorts of religion, which you see I need in some shape.

To church then you must go; but let your church be a sort of theatric entertainment to you at all times, a genteel and easy retreat from the labours of the week, and as friendly as possible to the passions and foibles of the human heart. Let diversions abound in the afternoon. I highly prize the benevolent endeavours of two illustrious princes of a far distant land, who both published of old, an indulgence to their subjects, to take all diversions on Sundays after the public service. One of these illustrious princes is still revered as a martyr by his country, and, I think, very deservedly.

Other methods than those I have mentioned, must be taken to fill the inferior churches, equally consistent with my views, and the propensities of the heart. There needs be no charm of music, or of eloquence, nor any sort of embellishment to attract your Pharisees: gloom, mere gloom will crowd their churches. All the melancholy, you know, like to be made more melancholy and peevish, by bitter reflections

fections against all others, and a liberal indulgence to their own weaknesses and vices. They may only be taught, that they are dear to God, as his sole witnesses, so very dear to him, that their grossest crimes cannot break their communion with him one moment. Withall, I shall never grudge them the most frequent use of public religion, which is as little hurtful to me, as it is popular and catching among you.

As to the rest of your city and nation I will say nothing: and having now instructed my gloomy friends, I, with great pleasure, turn to my polite and theatrical ones. My much honoured friends, behold for your encouragement the old worship fast declining, and making way for the new which I propose; but before I propose any thing further, I must make an honourable mention of an observation, in a celebrated speech in your supreme convocation, by One who was, and is not, and yet is, "That family worship, however suitable to former times, was but ill adapted to the manners of this age; wherefore he thought it ought not to be required of the laymembers of that convocation;" and, I think, nor of the ecclesiastical ones neither, for the same reason. For this observation I could almost worship the orator, if I had ever paid this compliment to any before him; but every one knows, I will not even worship G—D himself. Some narrow souls snarled a little at my friend's observation, which would have cost him an immediate expulsion from the house about a century ago, and perhaps something worse too. For my part, though I have always attended the sons of God in their meetings, I never had more satisfaction

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than in that meeting, to which the audacious orator gave no offence: I only blame him, that he did not complete his observation, by moving for the abolishing of the old public worship altogether, as well as that of families; which is in part done in the citadel of Terfa, where there is an excellent garrison, but not C——n, where I would rejoice to see this inscription on the gate,

Vi sola, non Deo defenditur.

However, no respectable gentleman can be offended at the worship I propose, though he may have the greatest dislike of the old worship. What I propose is so polite, and so nearly allied to the theatre, that I am naturally led to bestow some thoughts upon it for its further improvement.

I propose, that there be annexed a few temples of Venus to the theatre, beautifully constructed, pleasantly situated, and elegantly furnished; that these temples of Venus, be under the guardianship of — that they be constantly attended with the fairest and handsomest priestesses of the world, and some respectable matron preside as arch-priestess over the rest; that a physician, and surgeon, and an apothecary, be appointed to minister in their respective callings in those temples. No plague must issue from them, whatever may enter into them.

There must be a large accommodation in the polite churches, and in the theatre, which is the same thing in effect, for these priestesses of Venus, with this inscription in golden letters, *Dulce et decorum pro patria vivere.*

None must be admitted a priestess, without exa-

mination of ———, and approbation, and consent of ———. As to any competition among the intrants into the temple for the same priestess, let the Lady Directrix, I mean the arch-priestess, or the young beauty herself, which is fairer, determine it. Let there be the utmost decency and cleanliness in those natural pleasures, and no late hours allowed, nor drunken fots admitted. If any ——— chuse to honour those temples with his presence, let him have the preference above all others, among the priestesses, due to the or——r, upon account of the great emolument received, and the greater to be received by the theatre from it. Let nothing done within these walls, devoted to the improvement of the theatre, and of natural pleasure, ever transpire.

It is impossible to say, of what vast public utility those temples of Venus, adjoining to the theatre, would be. Thus desire, excited by all the art and labour of the poet, and the actresses and the constellation of beauties, in their dress, that is most alluring, would be prevented from subsiding: warm, quite warm from the theatre, gentlemen might rush into those temples, and gratify it to the full. What an offspring might there hence arise to repair and adorn the human race, like the Emims of old, whom inferior mortals would almost deify, and no way resembling what arises from a bare conjunction of interests instead of loves, a puny half-formed race, a pigmæan generation, little better than a mere *lusus natura*.

I can only see one inconvenience arising from these temples of Venus being so near the theatre—that the ladies, equally warm with the gentlemen, will
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try to break in with them. But they must go home to their husbands, or wait till they get them, or become candidates for a regular admission into the temples; if they do otherwise, I fear the world will be reversed, and innumerable rapes will be committed, or attempted, upon satiated reluctant youths.

If you allow a theatre at all, there can be no objection against these temples; there not being two things in nature more allied than these are. Banish amorous scenes from the theatre, and make it an entertainment perfectly moral, and it would not be at all frequented by such company as now resort to it. It would be only a place for tradesmen and their wives, but by no means for beaux and fine ladies, who might as well go and hear Christ crucified preached. My worthy —, you have learned from me, whatever you do, to do it decently and respectably, and I am on occasions an angel of light. You all know what you like to see and hear at a play, and what you feel there, though you do well to plead for the regularity of the entertainment: now, what I insist upon is this, your desires are raised to the utmost by a play, and if you do not find some method of gratifying them, you make the theatre become a Platonic hell, and you must suffer more than poets of old supposed Tantalus to do.

Is it not better to go to those temples to gratify your desire, than to sink into the horrid dens of filth and pollution, where diseases lurk, and death in all its terrors lies in ambush for you? Were the light of day to break into those infernal dens, they would appear more frightful than ever they were inviting. Those Cyclopean dens ought not to be tolerated in
any

any well governed country; and yet where is the country or city without them? Do they not destroy more of the human race, than the bloody sword, or the raging ocean? Vice so gross as that which is practised in those dens, hurts my kingdom very much, as it depopulates the world. Fruitful vice, that swells, and yet corrupts the numbers of mankind, serves my interest best. The extinction of those dens, and the establishment of these temples, would preserve many great family, without foreign or domestic aid. On each let this motto be put:

Pax intrantibus, salus exeuntibus.

There is but this objection to those temples, That many physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries must suffer by them, who can never subsist but for their profits upon intemperance. But let the greater good of the whole overbalance this little partial evil. Sordid is the following comparison, yet convincing: You will cure your horse, whatever becomes of the flies which lived upon his sore. Some of them still will be wanted for many other diseases than the v—l ones. The temples will want a few of these gentlemen, and the rest must betake themselves to other business.

Let the redundant physicians ascend the stage, and distribute their eloquence and their drugs, or become priests upon my new establishment. The superfluous surgeons may take to the sword and musket, and distinguish themselves in the noble toils of Mars, in all the ravishing scenes of heroic havoc, rather than in clysters, incisions and amputations. The starving apothecaries may become city-executioners; or, if
they

they rather chuse an employment more lucrative and genteel, I would advise them to gain a respectable livelihood, by shewing the world the mystery of the medical art, in the composition of drugs the simplest, and yet the most expensive, by being dignified with Greek names, and many sounding and magical words.

But I think I need be at no loss to provide for all these gentlemen another way. A future state is fast wearing out in Bellicosa, and indeed over all my dominions; yet it is natural for man to be ambitious of some sort of immortality. Let the body be therefore preserved among you, as in Egypt of old, to gratify this natural appetite for immortality, and let all these gentlemen become embalmers, where each will have ample employment: and further, in every great house, where there is a gaming-room, let all the sacred mummies of the family be set in their niches, in beautiful order, who will bear their part in the conversation, as well as any other of the company.

I hope to have my statue erected over the door of the theatre, for my laboured, and yet natural improvement of it. Venus owes many obligations to me, and I expect all your fine ladies will revere me for my friendship to that ancient goddess. I need say nothing in behalf of Bacchus, whose temples fill every city, and are crowded every day and night. I expect too the thanks of those youths who tire of scholastic systems, and will find my improvements in religion the prettiest and pleasantest imaginable. Even my gloomy friends will respect me. Farewell.

I am yours, at present, to please you,

LUCIFER."

T H E E N D.

they rather than as employment more intimate and
 personal, I would advise them to gain a valuable
 livelihood, by showing the world the strength of the
 intellect, in the composition of a good language.
 and for the most part, by being honest with
 Greek names, and many, many, and many
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But I think I need be at no loss to provide for all
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